

The Sweetest Comforts in Life. © Xen.

One of the tenderest stories I ever heard came from a well-seasoned nurse who was nobody's fool. She started out as a nurse's aid in a Hospice. The work was emotionally taxing at best. A patient she still remembered was an old woman dying of cancer. It takes a lot of dying before a person dies. On this woman's deathbed, in the last few minutes before she passed, the aid asked her patient if there was anything she could get or do to comfort her. The old woman whispered, 'All I need now is a man and peppermint stick...' The nurse thoughtlessly remarked, 'What would you do with a man...' The old woman disgustedly glared at her, then looked away and continued staring out of an open window until passing only moments later. Soon after, recalled the nurse, "it occurred to me what that old woman meant and how heartless were my words. She understood what I did not. *When facing death, to her the sweetest comforts were in the security of warmly holding a man, perhaps as a frightened child holds her father or favorite stuffed doll, while savoring a soothing peppermint candy.*" Often that is how it goes, the brain has no heart, and heart has no brain. When speaking from the heart it may seem thoughtless. When speaking from the head it may seem heartless. Continuing the nurse said, 'I was thinking not feeling.' If living and dying were only in the simplicity of holding loved ones and the taste of peppermint sticks...

The Final Visitor. © Xen.

The house front door stands open wide, while a lonely old woman slowly moves about inside. Nothing seems in or out of place, just there. She fidgets with a couch pillow moving it here, there, then back to its original spot. Silly me, she muses, "I am behaving like my old porch hound that would lie down, uncomfortably get up to circle three times to the right, then three times left then lie down comfortably in the original place for a nap." My old dog used to perform that circular ritual every day before... Her notice glimpses something outside through a dark window glass. She toddles out the open door to investigate. In the yard, she discovers a blooming rose and mutters to self, "my old eyes play tricks on me, again!" With aged hands – gnarled and weak, she touches the open flower. The sense of velvet petals and delicate fragrance bring thoughts of her blossoming womanhood, the best of times when all the flowers were once brighter and more fragrant, which followed early years of budding girlhood, before the worst of times at petal drop and decline, mumble, mumble. A small tear forms and drops from her eye. 'Ah!' She snorts, "Now it is my eyes and nose acting foole-jokers! I am being an old, sentimental dupe, mumble, mumble..." The old woman wipes away her wetness to survey the rose for a very last time, and then she totters back inside remembering to leave the door completely open. Mumble, mumble, a visitor comes today, the first since... she brightens; I must wait in the ready to go – home!